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## First breeding record of the Greenish Warbler *Phylloscopus trochiloides* in alpine habitats, southern Tibet

XIN LU

The Greenish Warbler *Phylloscopus trochiloides* is a medium-size (9 g) Old World leaf warbler. Its breeding range covers northern Eurasia, but there are two reproductively isolated forms that are connected to the south by a long chain (Baker 1997). Through this chain of populations, traits in morphology, ecology, behaviour (Irwin 2000, Irwin *et al.* 2001) and genotype (Irwin *et al.* 2005) change gradually, providing an interesting example of 'speciation by force of distance'. However, it seems that the species's distribution as currently recognised does not include high-altitude populations in the Tibetan plateau.

Over the Tibetan plateau, data on breeding ecology of this species have been collected in a few sites, including Himalayan Kashmir (Price and Jamdar 1991) and southern Gansu in China (Bi 2004). On 20 July 2006, I found a Greenish Warbler nest in an alpine scrub-covered valley (Xiongse, 29°27'N 91°40'E) near Lhasa, southern Tibet. In the Lhasa area, alpine scrub has suffered heavy degradation outside the valleys owing to long-term human activity, but it persists inside the valleys like my study site so that some birds vulnerable to vegetation degradation, such as the Tibetan Eared Pheasant *Crossoptilon harmani*, are able to breed there (Lu and Zheng 2003).

The domed-shape nest (external diameter 118 mm, internal diameter 60 mm, depth 87 mm) was located at 4,100 m a.s.l. in alpine willow woodland near a stream on a north-facing slope. As with congeners in other areas (Price and Jamdar 1991, Bi 2004), it was placed on the ground with small bushes for shelter, and had moss and thin grass but no feathers as its main construction materials. This differs from the sympatric Tickell's Leaf Warbler *Phylloscopus affinis*, which always uses feathers to line its nest (Lu 2008). The nest held three nestlings. They weighed 7.9–8.9 g, had dull upperparts and light yellow underparts, and received food (green caterpillars

and flies) from both parents. The male parent (identified by lack of a brood-patch) was trapped and measured in mm: body length 118.0, tail 54.2, wing 61.3, tarsus 21.0 and bill 8.5. The species normally shows one wing-bar but this individual showed two.

Typically, the Greenish Warblers are adapted to nest at high altitudes. In Kashmir, they were observed to occur in birches close to the treeline (3,300–3,600 m: Price and Jamdar 1991); in southern Gansu they prefer to nest in conifer forests at 2,000–2,500 m (Bi 2004). My alpine site (4,100 m) represents the highest breeding record of the species. I have carried out fieldwork on alpine breeding birds in this area over the past decade. Relative to Tickell's Leaf Warbler, for which more than 50 nests have been observed over 10 breeding seasons, Greenish Warbler is rather scarce at this site, with this nest being my only breeding record of this species there. Ticehurst (1938) noted Gyantze near Lhasa as the site of a breeding record (altitude 14,000 feet), but he also stated that the record was uncertain as the specimen that was shot could not be traced and no one has met with the species there since.

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## Records of Black-browed Reed Warbler *Acrocephalus bistrigiceps* from Luzon, Philippines

PHILIP D. ROUND and TIMOTHY H. FISHER

We detail records in 2008 and 2009 of Black-browed Reed Warblers *Acrocephalus bistrigiceps* from Candaba, Pampanga Province, Luzon, Philippines, made during searches for Streaked Reed Warbler *A. sorghophilus*, conducted jointly on behalf of the Wild Bird Club of the Philippines and The Wetland Trust, UK.

On 24 April 2008 at c.07h30, THF and PDR heard short, soft ‘chacking’ sounds from a small *Acrocephalus* warbler in a narrow margin of *Phragmites* along a track at the entrance to the ‘Mayor’s Pond’, Barangay Visal San Pablo, Candaba (15°04’N 120°53’E). THF saw the first bird, and this, then a second, flew across the track. The initial assumption was that both were Streaked Reed Warblers, since this was the only species of small *Acrocephalus* then recorded in Philippines. The views were fleeting (PDR never saw the first individual), but the second individual showed a plain mantle and PDR’s immediate impression was that it looked very like a Black-browed Reed Warbler. THF made ‘pishing’ noises and at least one of the two birds responded by singing. PDR made a tape of the song with a Sennheiser ME 66 microphone and a Sony MD player, and played the tape back. This attracted the bird. Views were initially fleeting, but eventually it climbed towards the tops of reed-stems where it was seen initially breast-on and then later back-on, at ranges of 5–10 m. The combination of the head pattern, in which a broad, black lateral crown-stripe contrasted with a pale central crown and a broad, long creamy supercilium, and the unstreaked upperparts left us in no doubt that it was a Black-browed Reed Warbler. Black-browed Reed Warbler differs from Paddyfield Warbler *A. agricola* and Manchurian Reed Warbler *A. tangorum* (neither of which has yet been recorded in Philippines) in its bold and long black brow, which contrasts markedly with the pale central crown. It differs from Streaked Reed Warbler in its plain (instead of streaked) upperparts which lack a contrasting rufous rump; and from all three species by its slightly shorter tail in which the individual rectrices are broader and more rounded at the tip.

Erection of an 18 m mist-net in an attempt to catch the bird took longer than expected as the net was tangled. The minidisk player and a small speaker were placed on

the ground beneath the net, with the disk set to play repeatedly the song PDR had just taped. However, there was no obvious response and the bird ceased singing within c.15 minutes of the net being erected and was not seen again.

PDR and Madsen Bajarias returned to the site at 05h00 on 27 April and immediately erected 2 × 18 m superfine small-mesh mist-nets and 1 × 12 m regular small-mesh mist-net in series along the *Phragmites*-fringed track. This was again accompanied by continuous playback of the same recorded song. THF and Jon Hornbuckle arrived shortly afterwards. No small *Acrocephalus* were either seen or heard until 06h45 when MB commenced to extract a small bird from the net. JH approached and determined that it was a Black-browed Reed Warbler and took over the extraction. The bird was placed in a bag and was examined at approximately 07h15, by which time Carmela Española, Michael C. Lu, Felix Servita and Joey Zaballero were also present. A detailed plumage description and biometrics were recorded (by PDR), after which the bird was photographed (Plate 1) and released.

**Plate 1.** Black-browed Reed Warbler *Acrocephalus bistrigiceps* caught at Candaba, Philippines, 27 April 2008. (P. D. Round/The Wetland Trust)

